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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: GERMANY, IRAN, ECONOMIC, GUANTANAMO,  
HONDURAS; BERLIN

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- 11. Lead Stories Summary

There is only one story in the press this morning: the outcome of the Bundestag elections. Editorials also focused on Bundestag elections but also on the state parliament elections in Brandenburg and Schleswig-Holstein. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast *heute* and ARD-TV's early evening newscast *Tagesschau* opened with reports on the results of the Bundestag elections.

#### 12. (Germany) Outcome of Bundestag Elections

The media this morning are dominated by the outcome of the Bundestag elections. The headline in FAZ is: "CDU/CSU and FDP can Now Govern Together;" Die Welt headlined: "CDU/CSU/FDP Majority for Angela Merkel - SPD Reached Worst Result since 1949," and Sueddeutsche opened with the headline: "Majority for Merkel and Westerwelle - SPD Suffers Bitter Defeat." According to Tagesspiegel, "FDP Safeguards Victory for CDU/CSU/FDP Coalition," and Handelsblatt emphasized: "FDP Saves Chancellor." Commentaries and editorials dealt primarily with the domestic implications of the elections.

ARD-TV's *Tagesthemen* (09/27) commented: "The Greens and the SPD failed spectacularly with the goal of preventing a coalition of the FDP and the CDU/CSU. But there will likely be several areas where we can expect a controversy between the two parties: domestic security, civil rights or healthcare reform. Chancellor Merkel will certainly be astonished at her new partner. And what about the SPD? It has been given a chance from the voters: for a personal but also programmatic renewal."

ZDF-TV's *heute* journal (9/27) broadcast the following commentary: "The FDP under Chairman Guido Westerwelle is the clear winner of

these elections. Because the voters knew exactly what he would get. With respect to the CDU, the voter did not know this because the chancellor left everything open. The CDU now has to foot the bill because it reached its second-worst result since 1949.... This is a warning shot, but also offers the CDU the opportunity to define in a coalition with the FDP its Christian Democratic profile again. The voters wanted a stable government, and this is what the country needs. The CDU/CSU/FDP coalition must now resolve the main problems (the indebtedness of the state) and be measured against its election campaign promises, i.e. no tax increases."

According to Sueddeutsche Zeitung (9/28), "During the election campaign, FDP leader Westerwelle only said what he always said: 'Release the Market Forces,' and 'Reduce Taxes.' Because of the simplicity of these slogans, he won. The crash of the banks did not irritate him and he pretended that the economic crisis had nothing to do with the FDP and its doctrine. Westerwelle simply stuck to his core statements. Many voters obviously considered this to be the FDP's expression of sustainability. This election Sunday...marks a turning point for Guido Westerwelle. As of today, his airy promises and the FDP's vision of lowering taxes will be over. To lower taxes when the State is in debt for hundreds of billions of euros in order to create the conditions for an economic boom would be to play Russian roulette with Germany's society."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (9/28) editorialized: "The second Merkel government will be faced with a leftist phalanx which this country has not seen for a long time. Will this power succeed in blowing away the rigidities of the grand coalition and reveal Angela Merkel's real core? At least, the FDP would not be opposed to

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reforms. And finally the CDU chairwoman can now act the way she always wanted to act. It will be an exciting question to see which Angela Merkel will govern this country in the future."

Mass-circulation, right-of-center tabloid Bild-Zeitung of Hamburg (9/28) argued: "What the politicians did not achieve during this blurred election campaign is something the voters achieved with their votes: clarity! This is good for democracy. This is good for Germany. The grand coalition has been voted out of office, not because it did a bad job, but because the voters did not want a second round of bad compromises. With a clear majority for a CDU/CSU/FDP coalition, the voters showed greater courage than the politicians entrusted in them. This is a clear mandate for Angela Merkel and Guido Westerwelle. A mandate FOR resolute action, a mandate FOR keeping to election campaign promises!"

Frankfurter Rundschau (9/28) observed: "The decline of the mainstream parties is the headline of these elections. It turned the SPD into a shadow of itself. Germany's Social Democracy is faced with essential transformations. It will definitely lose the status of a mainstream party if it continues to...save itself in a grand coalition. After eleven years with limited top personnel, the SPD is faced with a new beginning. With or without SPD chancellor candidate Steinmeier, the SPD must launch a tactical, programmatic offensive to win back the confidence of left-leaning voters. It will have this chance in the opposition; it is its only chance."

Regional daily Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (9/28) had this to say: "Several things will now certainly change in the Chancellery. A new version must be loaded for the theory and practice of Merkel's governing system: Merkel 09. Then the situation will be less presidential, but rather normal if not more combative. Merkel's power has grown but at the same time, it will be easier to assail her policy. Merkel must adjust to greater criticism in the Bundestag, in the media, and probably also in the streets. When the grand coalition announced unpopular measures such as the higher pension age, the participation of the SPD subdued public anger. In the future, however, this will be different."

Neue Ruhr/Neue Rhein-Zeitung of Essen (9/28) judged: "Germany voted for a change. After the monotony of the grand coalition, there will now be new impulses and a true political competition. Angela Merkel's winning smile, however, is deceiving. She has lost. In view of the desolate state of the SPD, she should not have lost any

percentage points.

#### 13. (Iran) New Enrichment Plant

S|ddeutsche (9/28) editorialized: "The infamous clock for an attack on the nuclear plants is ticking very loud. The Israelis are beating the drums. Their support for new sanctions only seems to have a military purpose. The highly cautious U.S. President Obama wants to know the whole truth about the nuclear program or have sanctions that hurt. Otherwise there will be a war. However, the Iranians are standing by their tactic of gambling for time. They want to show their new plant to IAEA inspectors, but they don't say when. This kind of delaying tactics will no longer work. On Thursday, the P5 and Germany will meet with the Iranians in Geneva."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (9/26) remarked in an editorial: "For years, the Iranian regime has been deceiving the international community with its nuclear program. Iran only admitted its secret activities, which have to be reported to the IAEA, when they became known elsewhere... The long-term suspicion that Iran was operating another plant to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons seems to be true. The explosive news announced by Obama at the beginning of the G20 will put Iran on the defensive during the upcoming talks with

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the P5 and Germany. If it again refuses to start serious talks, it will be easier to punish Iran with effective sanctions."

Tagesspiegel (9/26) noted in an editorial: "It has been a long time ago since the West was so united, vigorous and definite in its call on Iran to disclose its nuclear program and allow international checks. The short statement from Tehran... is a provocation. It is difficult to believe that Western intelligence services did not know about the plant, but Iran's admission makes clear that the country is pursuing a deceptive policy in the face of international pressure. The tough response by the West lays the groundwork for the talks of the P5 and Germany with Iran on its nuclear program, which will be restarted after a pause of half a year. The West does not believe in quick successes.... However, the dual strategy of offers and threats will be no longer credible if consequences are not finally decided."

Die Welt am Sonntag (9/27) remarked that "the existence of a second Iranian nuclear plant is not a surprise. The West could have known it for a long time - and should have responded to it.... Even Barack Obama no longer rules out a military option to prevent the Iranian bomb. It seems as if he is getting closer to his predecessor's disillusionment with the Iranian regime."

Frankfurter Rundschau (9/28) opined: "Iran once again deceived the West. Iran was secretly building a second enrichment plant, while U.S. President Obama offered talks to Tehran. However, the West only has the option of diplomacy in the nuclear dispute with Iran. Obama is therefore warning against the unavoidable confrontation if Iran does not comply with international regulations. However, he is also not giving up on the hope that the upcoming talks of the P5 and Germany with Iran will pave the way for an exit out of the dangerous nuclear crisis. Iran's secrecy has increased the unity of the West. Even Russia seems to be ready now to use sanctions to force Iran to comply."

#### 14. (Economic) Aftermath of G-20 Summit

Deutschlandfunk (9/25) radio commented: "The summit in Pittsburgh made obvious that not much has happened so far to make the international financial system more stable. The fear of collapsing giants is enormous.... The governments can still be blackmailed and no watchdog in the world will be able to oversee the situation. More moderate bonus payments won't change this... And let's hope that the next bubble has not been created by the time banks are forced to have more capital reserves."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (9/26) editorialized on its front page: "The countries of the G20 are obviously convinced that this format is important and capable of taking action... The announcement in

Pittsburgh that the G20 will continue to cooperate on international economic policies does therefore not come as a surprise. We don't have to call for a global economic government.... However, the changes in economic balances made this development obvious, if not even indispensable. The upgrading of the G20 as a forum of the industrial and threshold countries is particularly an acknowledgment of Asia's economic rise."

FT Deutschland (9/26) commented: "The leaders of the largest economic economies have introduced tougher and more binding regulations for banks than ever before. Whether this will suffice will depend on the details of the regulations, which again depends on whether the governments will take the implementation seriously and resist the pressure of financial lobbyists. The substance of the agreements means real progress is possible.... The only weak spot of the agreements is the timetable.... The reasoning of the G20 for the extended timeframe that the banks need time to rebound is not convincing. Too many of them are already making good profits

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again."

Handelsblatt (9/28) said in an editorial: "The idea of a tax on financial transactions was taken quickly off the table in Pittsburgh. However, the debate about the question of who would pay the bill for the crisis is only getting started. This refers to another challenge the G20 faces. The topic of climate protection will not move an inch if the key problem of funding environmental protection measures is not clarified first. We can bet that the G20 will then discuss a tax on financial transactions again soon."

#### 15. (U.S.) Closure of Guantnamo

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (9/28) opined under the headline: "America Unable to Get Rid of its Disgrace," and wrote: "Now four months before the period expires in which President Obama wanted to close the Guantnamo prison camp, one thing seems to be clear: America will have difficulty getting rid of it. First, the government does not know where to bring the remaining 223 prisoners; and, second, there is the looming danger that America could again damage its reputation as a democracy by setting up a new Guantnamo on the mainland. Opposition politicians in Congress want to prevent Obama from bringing any prisoners to U.S. territory, irrespective of whether these are masterminds of 9/11 or poor souls whom the U.S. courts have proclaimed to be innocent. The populism with which Obama is confronted is as lousy as it is overpowering.... That is why he will have to fight. But even if 'Camp Justice' is to close down, new injustice is looming because Obama's legal advisors want to keep at least 50 prisoners in custody which are 'highly dangerous,' but whose files are based on information obtained through torture. By doing so, the U.S. president would again damage the United States's image as a country where the rule of law prevails. Obama knows what he is doing, at least to the same extent as the general knew who set up the first block in Guantnamo in 2001."

#### 16. (Honduras) Escalation of the Situation

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (9/26) editorialized: "If former Honduran President Zelaya had hoped that his return to Tegucigalpa would result in an uprising against the so-called putschists, then the past days taught him better. Not only the oligarchy but also the majority of Hondurans are still determined not to allow Venezuelan President Chvez to have a say. Six candidates are running for the job as president and they cover all political leanings. It is necessary to vigorously back these presidential elections and not to delegitimize them from all sides."

MURPHY